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The Ragg — The Name is Official

Though it is little more in size than a crossroads on the main Thurles/Nenagh road, it enjoys something few places in Ireland can boast — three names.

The spot in question is known variously as The Ragg, Inch and Bouladuff nut now the population of this end of the parish of Drom-Inch have come down in favour of one name for the locality — The Ragg.

Last week-end a plebiscite was held among the 300 people residing in this end of the parish, and voting on a proportional representation basis on Sunday last, parishioners decreed that henceforth the area will be known as The Ragg, note the double g.

Reason for the taking of such a decision stems from the renewed interest in the locality in the Bord Failte Tidy Towns' competition, and last year when a Bord Failte adjudicator was on his rounds, he had difficulty in finding "The Ragg", which title does not appear on official maps. The local schoolhouse is known as Inch School House, and the post office is Bouladuff Post Office.

In order to rectify the matter, and with three names to choose from the committee organised a plebiscite on Sunday last, and the popular vote went to The Ragg — on the second count.

Incidentally, the origin of the name is of interest, and one local told us that it dated back to the days of brewing illicit spirits, when a rag would be hung out of the window in the area to indicate that poteen was available.

Another theory is that the rag was displayed from a window locally in trouble times to denote the presence of crown forces in the locality.

But whatever the origin of the name, the area is now, officially, The Ragg, at least as far as Bord Failte is concerned, and a sign indicating this effect is to be erected on the approach roads to the village.

Editorial Comment:—

DOUBLE STANDARDS

Launched in a blaze of publicity and glamourised by the abundance of stories of instant "easy money", the National Lottery has taken the country by storm. Its impact has been such however, that concerned people in the community have expressed real fears of the inherent danger of the lure of instant wealth, particularly for the less well off sections.

Stories of welfare benefits of one sort or another being "blown" on lottery tickets have made headlines, and already, it is reported, many families have had to do without the necessities of life because meagre resources were squandered irresponsibly in a bid to get rich quick.

Of course nobody forces anybody to buy a ticket, but, unlike drink or drugs, addiction to gambling does not manifest itself so readily, with the result that family pride may conceal the real hardship being suffered because of the considerable sums being spent on the draw. In the first five days alone, 5.7 million tickets were sold, which means that if that level of activity is maintained, the lottery will realise a staggering £416.1m. in a year, and even if interest waned by fifty per cent, it is still an enormous sum of money.

The whole country, we are told, will benefit from the lottery by way of funding for projects that would not otherwise have been possible in designated areas of sport and recreation, the arts, health and national culture, but one has to ask how local organisations which contribute directly to the social and recreational amenities of their areas by way of providing facilities, are to compete. The club draw has become a standard means of raising funds for these organisations, and it has the very important added benefit that money raised in an area through such an activity, is spent in the area on the provision of amenities.

One must also question the double-standards involved. Legally newspapers and the media generally are prohibited from publishing notices indicating that draws, raffles, bingo, etc. are going to be held, yet, for a government sponsored "gamble", there appears to be no such restrictions, either by way of advertising or publicity.

Similarly, official condemnation of the dangers of "one-armed-bandits" have been frequent and strong, yet every and any inducement is being placed before the public to win their support for what might well be considered as being every bit as dangerous.

Let us all hope that good sense will prevail, and that the lottery will serve the purpose for which it was initiated, rather than become "a monster" gorging itself on the preserves of local enterprise and to its detriment.

Ballingarry Fights Back

PROPOSALS to quarry a high grade stone slab which should, according to independent research, have wide appeal in the construction industry, both on the national and international scene, are currently under way in Ballingarry where it is confidently predicted that the project has a capacity to create up to five jobs at the start-up phase.

(By Anne O'Grady)

And off-shoots of the local community council are putting other ideas into motion in a plan to counter the high unemployment in the area.

The cost of launching the Lickfinn project is estimated to be in the region of £15,000 and the local group responsible for initiating the research have established a "Slieveardagh Enterprise Co-operative Society Limited", selling £1 shares, to fund the industry.

The quarry, today owned by Willie Fitzgerald of Glengoole, has not been commercially worked since the 1930s but prior to that it had produced flag-stones for use on kitchen floors, footpaths etc. It was extensively used by local authorities providing footpaths in towns within a thirty-mile radius of Lickfinn and today some of the flags are still in evidence in Clonmel.

The independent research was conducted by the Department of Building and Civil Engineering in the School of Engineering, Moylish, Limerick who have predicted that it is an economically viable enterprise.

According to the Department of Engineering, Lickfinn stone has qualities similar to a slate quarry and is essentially of this variety. "It is a strong, durable material, easily quarried in substantial deposits. It tends to come away in clean slabs approx. 1" thick (25mm) with a remarkably true surface plane".

The colour of the stone varies between sea green and a reddish brown and it is, say Moylish, ideally suitable for quarrying with hand tools, thereby minimising expenditure on capital equipment. Due to its nature and colouring the material lends itself to a variety of uses including fireplaces, crazy paving, wall cladding, flagging in tile form for floors, shop fronts, garden furniture, souvenirs, heraldic designs etc. These uses are said to be just a sample based on initial research.

In its natural state, the stone is said to have a beautiful riven finish; it can be rubbed to bring out the natural green colour in a matt finish and in this state it is ideally suitable for hand cut lettering, engraving of heraldic design, e.g. names of shop facades, public buildings, private house names and numbers. It can also be polished to a high degree making it suitable for interior use. If split to a narrower gauge it would be suitable for slating purposes.

MODEST NEEDS

To develop the project the team would need a diamond saw and polishing machine initially; and as the enterprise progressed, a fork lift and pick-up truck. Moylish estimate that "because of its versatility it should have wide appeal to the construction industry both on the national and international scene". Its ease of quarrying should make it cost effective, thereby creating an economically viable enterprise. The potential range of products ensures a very good mix and all the indications are that it has the capacity to create three to five jobs at the start up phase.

The Department of Building and Civil Engineering has recommended that the local group identify persons willing to undertake a training course to include use of tools and equipment, techniques of the stone-cutting trade, methods of working Lickfinn stone slab and design and manufacture of prototype products; as well as initiate a market research programme and set up a production facility. It has offered to train two people itself.

The quarry at Lickfinn had enjoyed a successful period until the advent of concrete forced it out of commercial production, over fifty years ago. However, in recent times there has been a growing reversal to the traditional materials and the Ballingarry Community Council, vigilant of its community's employment needs, took the progressive step of having Lickfinn stone analysed; they now believe that they can re-open the quarry and establish a small industry with Lickfinn slabs. In addition to Moylish's generous offer to train two young people, AnCO, under its local officer, Mr Jim Heuson, have agreed to grant aid the training.

Mr Fitzgerald, the present owner of the quarry has also graciously allowed the Council use the quarry and Avonmore Creamery have indicated that they are prepared to allow the group use one of their buildings at a nominal fee.

However, the Council say, they require the modest amount of £15,000 to initiate the project; this includes £7,000 for machinery, £3,000 in insurance and a cash flow of £5,000 to pay wages at the start-up stage. The £15,000 would provide a minimum of three jobs, a small investment, they state. They have already identified some markets for the slabs and though they are not formally established to take orders, the initial reaction to a sample on display at Avonmore is "very enthusiastic".

They hope to raise the capital through the "Slieveardagh Enterprise Co-operative Society Limited" and are confident that people will invest in more than just one share. Moylish, they say, believe the stone is of a unique type and that the warm colour will result in a successful product. The Community Council also intend approaching state bodies for assistance and the fact that Slieveardagh is a disadvantaged area should help their case. They will initially start with cut and polished stone but hope to make floor tiling which would be suitable for churches and State buildings eventually.

The target date is the 1st July but, the Council stress, orders can be received in the meantime; they would, according to co-ordinator, Bill Martin, be "filled if we got them".

CRAFTS SALE

The progressive community council under chairman, Rev. T. Ryan C.C., Director Sr. Regis, Co-ordinator Bill Martin and Secretary Patricia Norton, have also looked at and identified other areas for development. Having already held a successful exhibition of crafts, locally produced, they now intend organising another for September next when the items will go on sale. Whatever lines sell, will be investigated with a view to commercial production.

In addition one man in the area, Eddie Mullally has attended a horticulture course at Kildalton and he has now started producing his own products. The Council say they are hoping to establish a horticulture business within the community "producing food for Ballingarry in Ballingarry rather than in Holland".

OTHER PRODUCTS

The third project in hand is under the capable organisa-

(Continued on Page 7)

Miss Mairead Nesbitt (19), of Kilnesare, Loughmore who was a member of a quartet who won the Ensemble section at Feis Maitiu, Cork, last week. (see "Ormond Diary" story).

Famed Bushranger's Descendants from Tipp.

AS a new film is being made in Ireland, America and Britain about the legendary Australian 'Robin Hood', Ned Kelly, the bushranger, it can be revealed for the first time who his descendants are.

They include the noted horse racing personality, Jimmy Fitzgerald, trainer of 'Forgive and Forget', who is a native of Horse & Jockey and whose stables are at Malton, Yorkshire. Other Irish descendants of the bushranger are veterinary surgeon Mr Jeremiah Kelly, Killenaule; nurse Teresa Clancy, Johnstown; Mrs Kathleen Maher (sister of Mrs Clancy), Fethard; and Mr James Fitzgerald, Turtulla, Thurles.

The Australian bushranger's father, John Kelly from Clonbrogan, Killenaule, was married to Mary Cody, a relative of Buffalo Bill. The latest movie about Kelly is being made by Mr Angus Forbes, grandson of Richard Taite who made the world's first ever feature film, a movie about Ned Kelly and his gang back in 1906.

Mrs Teresa Clancy said that her grandmother was a Kelly, a descendant of Ned Kelly. Local historian Noel Gaynor, Thurles Swimming Pool, has uncovered records which prove that Mrs Clancy's grand-uncle was a Canon Ed. Kelly, an Australian armed forces Chaplain who won the Military Cross during World War One. This cross is now in St. Patrick's College, Thurles.

THURLES TO LOSE MORE JOBS

THE GLOOM on the unemployment scene in Thurles deepened this week with the news that jobs are to go at the Tiklas factory. Though negotiations are at present in progress, the likelihood is that thirteen jobs will go shortly, with a further thirty in jeopardy. Deputy Michael Lowry has called on the company to make "a clear statement on its desire to remain in Thurles".

The Thurles factory employs 112 people at present in the manufacture of clothes (anoraks) and the present crisis is understood to stem from the loss of a major market which it enjoyed for some years and the extreme difficulty in finding compensatory new markets in this very competitive field to take up the manufacturing capacity of the Thurles plant.

The company is at present negotiating with the IDA concerning a reduction in factory space which will reduce capacity by almost half, with consequently much lower overheads.

Deputy Michael Lowry has intimated his concern to the IDA that a reduction of this magnitude could mean that the company would not remain economically viable. He said that in view of the multi national companies' known thirst for high turnover and substantial profits this could be a very precarious position for Tiklas (Ireland) Ltd. to be in.

"The IDA share my anxiety and are in close contact with the company, and are willing to give every assistance to help it over the present crisis.

A decisive and very important meeting between the IDA and Tiklas will be held later this week to conclude an agreement for the future", he said.

Deputy Lowry concluded that he would be pressing Tiklas to ensure that adequate redundancy was paid in recognition of the commitment and service given by the staff involved. "I will also request the company to make a clear statement on its future intentions to dispel lingering doubts about its desire to remain in Thurles as a viable economic plant. The compmy must now give priority to the manufacturer and marketing of new quality products to retain a niche in ths textile industry. I am requesting the Minister of Industry and Commerce to take an interst in the present negotiations with a view to ensuring that all possible assistance will be made available. As a local member of the Oireachtas, and very much aware of the serious decline in the industrial base of Thurles, I will be monitoring development closely", he said.

Nenagh Access Road Dispute

AN OFFER of £50,000 and two acres of land in a bid to acquire 0.4 acres for the development of an access road has been turned down by Abbey Machinery Ltd., it was revealed at a meeting of Nenagh Urban Council on Monday night.

The council want the land linking Martyrs Road and Abbey Street for an access road which would allow them to develop car parking in the centre of the town.

At Monday night's meeting, Mr Paddy Richardson read a letter from Mr Charles Cavanagh, Director of Abbey Machinery to the council. In it Mr Cavanagh stated:—

I note that consideration is being given to making a Compulsory Purchase Order in relation to part of Abbey Machinery property.

I would like to stress at the outset that the yard in question is an integral part of the Abbey Machinery operation in Nenagh and provides an essential area for the storage, loading and dispatch of the company's products. As you are probably aware Abbey Machinery Limited presently employs approximately 50 and hopes to expand its operations and workforce. Any interference with or diminution of its present facilities will seriously and adversely affect the company's plans and may result in abandonment of the expansion programme or indeed a cutback in the present scale of operations.

The attitude of my company to the situation may be summarised as follows:—

(1) We must have the use of the yard in question if our present operations are to continue and expand.

(2) We will accept a properly developed one acre site from the council in lieu of our yard if same is provided alongside our factory premises.

(3) We are not interested in a cash settlement for the yard.

(4) We feel that if the council attempts to acquire our yard it has a moral and legal obligation to give us a suitable alternative developed site and which is now readily procurable by the council.

Mr Tom Ryan said that along with the Town Clerk and John Ryan he was talking with Mr Cavanagh twelve months last February and this was exactly the case Mr Cavanagh put up on that occasion. He was sorry negotiations did not come to fruition but the other side of the argument was that the provision of the road would open up a whole lot of land for car parking space and develop the whole area.

Mr Joe O'Connor said the council have shown a great deal of goodwill towards Abbey Machinery and would continue to do so. What the council were doing was making a very generous offer of two acres of land adjoining their property and £50,000 but the company requested £100,000 for 0.4 of an acre. The council would have to abandon the idea of a road.

Mr Tom Ryan proposed and Mr Joe O'Connor seconded a resolution to impose a CPO on the land but it was eventually decided to adjourn a decision pending a meeting with company representatives on April 21st.

Mr Richardson said he firmly believed that if the council proceeded with a CPO they would not win. He felt ten acres of the Sahara Desert would be better than the alternative two acres offered to the company. The land was a mire and it would cost far more than the council's monetary offer of £50,000 to bring it up to standard.

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Members of the Whelan School of Dancing who were prizewinners at the Cashel set dancers Feis held in Cashel, Co. Tipperary. (Photo: Mike Hoare).